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AND
THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS



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The Gospel of St. John

AND THE

Synoptic Gospels



By ✓

FRITZ BARTH

Professor of Theology in the University of Bern



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INTRODUCTION

WHOEVER undertakes nowadays to advocate the genuineness and credibility of the Gospel of John, must be prepared beforehand for some prominent representatives of theological science and several among their pupils and adherents to say with indignation or pitiful smile: "Lost effort! It is the surest of the sure, that the fourth Gospel as an historical source for the life of Jesus is no more to be taken into account. Who still considers it as such is under the spell of church-tradition; custom goes ahead of truth; he has no idea particularly of the religio-historical method; science will take precedence over him in the order of the day, as over everything reactionary."

This sounds very suspicious, and whoever wishes to have his scientific character attested by authorities, will hesitate to invite such powerful opposition and anathema against himself. Nevertheless, when I commit this folly, it is because I have become convinced during the many years of my study of the

Gospel of John, that the opinions and prejudices of modern times have exercised a tyrannical power against this very book, the power of a theological school-tradition which can just as easily mislead the inquirer as the ecclesiastical tradition, so that one overlooks that which is nearest and announces the most improbable as a result. I turn to all those of whatever disposition they may be, for whom the mark of true scientific method consists not in vast conclusions and vindications, but in continuous, penetrative work on the problems of life.

The Johannean question belongs to the problems of *life*, as well as to the school of history and of literature. The Gospel of John is not one of those bubbles of the book market which for a few seconds change from one color to another, and then explode. It has established a *power of life* from one century to another, and has led many to God. A multitude of the most touching and beautiful facts of Church history are connected with passages from this book; and to this very day, even the most zealous opponent of its authenticity cannot but refer to some of its words. Its "religious importance" is

not questioned; and now it is of the greatest importance whether these powerful effects proceeded from a book which is connected with original Christianity in only an ideal, derivative relation, which would refute Schleiermacher's word, that every historical whole can only continue through the same forces by which it is originated—or, whether, in the Gospel of John, we have to deal with the historical Jesus whose real life is the ground of our faith, in a real world and history, and whether a trustworthy man speaks to us, whose book and manner of spirit stand in inner relation to Jesus of Nazareth.

That such questions touching the foundations of our Christian faith are discussed today more than ever, and even interest larger circles, I consider not as a misfortune but as an altogether serious call of God to the Christian Church to turn from all secondary things to Christ. The Church and its theology have been used too long to establish an artificial foundation for the certainty of faith, strangely composed of Christian-sounding truths founded on reason, of biblical authority and ecclesiastical usage. This

image with the golden head and feet of iron and clay has not proved itself to be durable. At the present time Christendom, in view of the questions of doubt which are raised on all sides, sees itself obliged to recollect its true, simple, God-given foundation, and to put its trust no longer in this and that—of which we may read in the Bible and elsewhere—but in Christ, the living Lord, the center and soul of the Bible. By this concentration we rather gain than lose. Faith in God, the Father of Jesus Christ, will in the future shine clearer than ever before, and bring salvation to many who now despise it; that they may no more be offended at Christians and their peculiarities, no more doubtfully and scoldingly insist on the shortcomings of the Church, but look up to Jesus, and in imitation of him find the purpose of their life. But, for this very thing, the Gospel of John offers the best help; this very book drives us from all externality and imperfection in the one thing which is of importance, and with quiet spiritual power, brings before us the question: “What have you in Christ?” “What has he of thee?” Now concerning this Gospel which no think-

ing man could pass by indifferently, this "most wonderful of all religious books," as Beidermann called it, the first question is, "Is it *credible*?" That is, Is this Gospel according to John to be accepted as historical fact? To this we may now direct our attention.

I

THE SELF-TESTIMONY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE fourth Gospel claims to have been written by an eye-witness of the life of Jesus, whereas, Luke in the introduction to his Gospel clearly distinguishes himself from the eye-witnesses who told him of Jesus. The fourth evangelist writes just as distinctly: "We *beheld* his glory" (1. 14), and whoever would refer to this as a mere mental seeing is opposed by the beginning of the first Epistle of John, betraying the same author as to language and contents, where we read: "That which we have heard, which we have seen, with our eyes, which we have looked upon and *our hands have handled* . . . declare we unto you." With special reference to the events immediately after the death of Jesus it is said: "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19. 35). Here speaks none other than the evangelist himself who, ac-

according to his custom retained throughout, determines not to emerge with his "I." In the most unmistakable manner he goes to ocular evidence for the statement; and it is not an ordinary disciple who speaks here, but one who indicates that he was especially near to Jesus. Frequently a disciple is mentioned "whom Jesus loved"; at the Last Supper the same was leaning on Jesus's bosom and asks him about the betrayer (13. 23 seq.); with the women he stands by the cross of Jesus, and to him Jesus gives his mother (19. 26 seq.). On Easter morning he hastens to the sepulchre and convinces himself that the body has not been stolen (20. 2 seq.). At the Lake of Gennesaret, he is the first to see the Lord and receives the much-talked of promise that he may perhaps live to see the coming of Christ (21. 7, 20 seq.). The same personality is probably meant by the anonymous disciple who, with Andrew, first finds Jesus by the Jordan (1. 35 seq.) and follows Jesus into the palace of the high priest, in whose house he was known (18. 15 seq.). This "disciple whom Jesus loved," is expressly designated at the close of the book (21. 24) as the author of the book: "This

is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and *wrote these things*; and we know that his testimony is true." The "we," who speaks here, can only be the disciples and friends of the author who transmitted his work to the congregations for use; they did not deem the note superfluous that the book deserved to be believed as the testimony of a friend of Jesus. It is also significant how, throughout, the same person appears together with Peter, the best known in the apostolic circle. Peter asks him to find out the name of the betrayer; Peter goes with him into the court of the high priest, and afterward to the sepulchre; Peter swims to the shore after the other has seen the Lord and afterward asks, displeased: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" Peter becomes only a disciple of Jesus after the other, and denies the Lord, whereas, of all the disciples this other is alone by the cross. This intimates that the author must be sought in the closest company of Jesus. This elect circle, however, consisted, according to the tradition known to every Christian, of Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John. Which of these two besides Peter could be

taken into account—was also to be learned from the history of the beginnings, which on sundry occasions makes Peter and *John* work together as at the healing of the lame man, at the first examination before the council, and at the preaching in Samaria (Acts 3. 1 seq.; 4. 19 seq.; 8. 14 seq.; comp. Luke 22. 8).

These facts bring us before the dilemma—either the author of the fourth Gospel is really an eye-witness (and indeed most probably John, the son of Zebedee), or he arrogated to himself in an extremely cunning manner by mysteriously veiling hints the part of an eye-witness, and carried this through over against Peter with a certain malevolence; and that he also found good friends who were ready to put their seal on this fraud (for it would mean nothing else), by declaring his testimony to be true, knowing it to be false.

For the first there is not only our immediate impression of the person of the author, but also many other reasons. The Gospel contains many individual traits which are entirely unessential for the course of history, but which explain themselves without say-

ing as the recollections of an eye-witness. What does it matter that the first two disciples come to Jesus at four o'clock? (John 1. 39) ; that just six waterpots of stone were at the marriage in Cana? (2. 6) ; that Jesus spoke of himself as the Light of the world in the Treasury? (8. 20.) But the lively recollection of a narrator who really experienced something, asks not which is important or unimportant, he simply reproduces the recollection-picture also in its secondary traits. These very things give to many descriptions of the fourth Gospel a great distinctness. Narratives like those of the Samaritan woman, of the man born blind, of the resurrection of Lazarus, of Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre, consummate themselves in tangible reality before our eyes, and will always set before the Christian the highest tasks.

The *language* of the Gospel points to a member of the primitive church; true it is written in Greek for Greek-speaking readers, for whom Jewish words (1. 42, 43; 9. 7) and customs (2. 6; 19. 31, 40) must be explained; but its entire mode of expression betrays Semitic thinking, especially the many

principal clauses connected by a mere "and," the literal repetition of things already said (1. 2, 25, 51; 4. 24; 8. 24; 16. 16 seq.), the tendency to parallel passages in which a contrast is developed (3. 18, 36; 5. 43; 8. 23); the relatively small vocabulary in which some leading ideas come out strongly. The language of Job has its closest analogies not in the writings of Hellenistic Judaism, but in the literature of Palestinian scribism. That the Jewish Christian who writes here, as an eye-witness, knew what he was about, can be seen from his free relation to the three older Gospels, the Synoptists (Matthew, Mark and Luke). He knows them, as can be seen from many details of his narrative, and he presupposes that his readers knew them. From them they know that John baptized (1. 25, 31), and was cast into prison (3. 24), that Jesus had twelve disciples (6. 67, 70), and used to visit Martha and Mary (11. 1). But he is very free in his deviation from the synoptic statements. He not only omits the greatest part of what they narrated and puts in its place other facts and discourses, but transfers also the most of which he speaks not to Galilee

but to the south, especially to Jerusalem; and instead of one passover festival, which the synoptists mention, he mentions three (2. 13; 6. 4; 11. 55), so that according to him the public ministry of Jesus must have lasted from two to three years. The death of Jesus, according to him, takes place on the fourteenth of Nisan, the day on whose evening the Jewish Passover was held (18. 28; 19. 14); whereas, the synoptists state that on that evening, Jesus still ate the Passover with his disciples (Matt. 26. 17; Mark 14. 12; Luke 22. 15), and was crucified on the fifteenth of Nisan. And to this a number of smaller differences with regard to the time of the cleansing of the temple, the anointing at Bethany, the crowning with thorns . . . in connection with which the author himself occasionally presumes an intimation that the synoptic account is inaccurate, or at least erroneous (John 3. 24; 4. 44). All these deviations from the current tradition would necessarily cause so much shaking of the head, and render the reception of the Gospel in the congregations so very difficult, that only another who as an important eye-witness, was conscious of

knowing the true details, could nevertheless dare to make them.

In reality an opposition to the genuineness of the book attached itself to these deviations in the second century. Certain Christians of Asia Minor, to whom Epiphanius afterward applied the foolish name "Alogoi," objected that the order of events, especially in the beginning and at the close differed considerably from the synoptic picture, and asserted that the Gospel was written by the Gnostic Cerinthus. Some leaders of the church at that time showed some inclination to agree with this statement, for the very people who caused the church fathers the most perplexity relied upon the Gospel of John. The Valentinians, a sect of the Gnostics, expressed their speculations on deity, world, soul and redemption with preference for Johannean formulas; and the Montanists, who preached the near coming of Christ, and in view of it intended to collect a so-called spiritual Church, asserted that the Comforter promised in the Gospel of John spoke through their founder, Montanus, and his female associates. In the church of Asia Minor the custom also prevailed of celebrating the

Lord's Supper for the time being on the fourteenth day of Nisan of the Jewish calendar in commemoration of the suffering and death of the Lord; and it was said that this custom was traced back to John. Now it could only cause surprise that in the Gospel of John the last supper of Jesus with his disciples takes place rather on the thirteenth of Nisan. That the church overlooked all these difficulties and left a weapon in the hands of its opponents rather than surrender the fourth Gospel, clearly shows that the church believed that it had proofs of its credibility, and well felt the spiritual difference which existed between this work and the well-meant but little valuable literature of the second century, such as the writings of Clement, Barnabas, Ignatius, Hermas, and Papias.

Slowly but surely the book passed into the use of the Church, just as those of the Synoptists and also the Epistles of Paul. We are first reminded of this work by the "Apostolic Fathers" and in the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles." About the middle of the second century writers of Asia Minor and the apologist Justin quote already some

passages without mentioning the author. A few decades later it appears as the fourth Gospel beside the synoptists in the New Testament canon, and is applied as holy Scripture (by Theophilus and Irenæus), yea, is already quoted against synoptic statements by Melito and Apollinaris of Hierapolis. The opinion is confirmed that it was written down by the aged apostle John at Ephesus toward the end of his life at the wish of his friends; and it was praised as the *pneumatic gospel* which doubtless originated under special inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It was especially esteemed as absolute authority in the controversies which already broke out in the second century concerning the person of Christ, and which were prolonged to the seventh century. It became the fundamental book for the formation of the Christ-dogma, and Luther calls it "the only tender, true, principal Gospel, to be much preferred to the other three and more highly esteemed."

II

REASONS AGAINST ITS CREDIBILITY

IN strong contrast with this special esteem of the Gospel of John stands the contrary opinion which became current in the nineteenth century through theologians like Bretschneider, Baur, Hilgenfeld, Keim, et al, and which may be thus briefly summed up: "This book narrates not actual facts which took place, but is only a didactic writing on the theme that Jesus is the divine logos who appeared in the flesh, and that its author was not an apostle and eye-witness, but some unknown Christian of the second century who, in the form of a narrative about Christ, gave his impressions of the essence and work of Christianity." This modern opposition to the Gospel, by which it is directly eliminated from the sources of the life of Jesus, is especially based upon its relation to the synoptists, and two points are here particularly to be mentioned. In the first place it is said: "The synoptic Gospels describe Jesus as the

son of his people and child of his time, as the great prophet and popular preacher of Nazareth, who proclaims the kingdom of God and heals the sick, who soon gets into conflict with the ruling Pharisaic party; is forsaken by the people and crucified as the false Messiah. This is a truly human biographical portrait to which nothing human of successes and disappointments had been strange. The Johannean Christ, on the other hand, is a divine being who comes from heaven to earth and never becomes natural in it. As a strange guest he walks among men and makes men feel his superiority; he performs great miracles, not out of compassion for the distress but to let his glory shine and to combine with it profound applications to the spiritual life. He delivers long discourses, not for the sake of instructing the people, languishing under the ban of legalism, in the righteousness of the kingdom of God and of bringing near to them the Father in heaven, but mainly for the sake of deposing to his divine origin and demanding acknowledgment of the same. He speaks of himself in images, calls himself the Bread of Life, the Light,

the Vine, and is indignant when his hints are misunderstood. He treats his Jewish countrymen like strangers, yea, like children of the devil, whose destruction is certain and deserving. He hardly notices objections; he speaks no parable to illustrate his teachings; his demeanor is dignified and solemn, but cold and noble, and this trait is retained in the history of the passion and resurrection. His disciples are not saved sinners but truthful men who feel attracted to him; the good come to him, not the lost. He himself passes through no development. From the beginning he is the Son of God and the Messiah who knows all things and is hardly in need of praying for himself. All these strange traits come from this, that from the beginning Jesus is perceived as a superhuman personality, as the Logos. This notion, however, comes from the writings of the Jew Philo of Alexandria; he has nothing in common with the historical Jesus." In the second place it is stated: "The discourses of Jesus in the Gospel of John, according to form and contents, have throughout the stamp of the Johannean mode of speech, not of the synoptic Jesus, as he comes before us, that

is, in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus and John the Baptist speak here just as the author speaks in his prologue and in his Epistles, seldom of the kingdom of God, of repentance and righteousness, but the more of light and darkness, life and death, truth and falsehood, heaven and earth, God and the world, these monotonously recurring pet-notions of the author, which reflect his dualistic conception of the world. This contrast between the upper and lower world has removed the early Christian contrast between the present and future time, and brought about a strong spiritualization of the synoptic eschatology, so that its essential elements (resurrection, judgment, eternal life) appear as already realized through Jesus."

Thus read the charges and when we ask: How could one be induced in the second century to undertake this strange remodeling of the life of Jesus from the human into the divine, from the simple into the noble, from the Jewish into the commonly human, we are answered by various suppositions. According to some the author was a Gnostic (perhaps Meander in Antioch) who wished

to recommend with this "Gospel of Truth" his philosophico-purified Christianity. According to the others the author wishes rather to oppose the Gnostics, by putting against them a better, ecclesiastical Gnosis. Others find in the book a concealed polemic against Judaism which would not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Still others read in the prologue and first chapters a special tendency against the communion of the disciples of John, of whom trace is preserved in the Acts of the Apostles (18. 25; 19. 3). One even observes that in the Gospel of John the second century with its struggles is reflected—the victorious march of the Gospel through the provinces of the Roman empire, the last convulsions of Judaism under Bar-kochba, the origin of the Catholic Church, and the problems of its apologetics. It remains indeed a strange expedient, boldly to impute about the year 110 or 140 something of an imposing splendor to the historical picture of Jesus, which Jews or heathen might miss and by that carry on an apology of Christianity. On this account many of the opponents of the genuineness of the Gospel did not get rid of the thought

that in this Gospel some recollections from the time of Jesus must at least have been utilized. A Christian of Asia Minor, it is supposed, put together communications of a disciple from Jerusalem, or a collection of discourses being current under the name of John was intertwined by a later redaction with narratives, or the author of the whole is indeed a John, but not the apostle. The son of Zebedee had never left Palestine but, according to the prophecy of Jesus: "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized" (Mark 10. 39). He was "killed by the Jews" according to a notice by Papias, like his brother James (Acts 12. 2). The Gospel was not written by him but by the presbyter John in Ephesus, whom Papias knew. But against this also important doubts arise: the Gospel is a work of one cast, a fact which is now opposed by the popular theory of separate sources. To draw inferences from assertions of the credulous Papias, means to build castles in the air and light up the dark with the darker. To keep away the apostle John from Asia Minor is a *coup* of despair, since the state-

ments of Irenæus, Polycrates and Apollonius in the second century cannot be removed. Further such a mighty alteration of the evangelical tradition by any disciple the Church of Asia Minor would have hardly stood. But is not the authority of the Apostle already disproved by the two reasons mentioned above?

III

THE SECRET OF THE PERSON OF JESUS

THE answer to the question just asked will depend on the notion which one has of the divine revelation to mankind. There was a time when one supposed it to be virtually a sum of doctrines on God and man, communicated by the Holy Ghost, written down by the authors of the biblical books authentically interpreted by ecclesiastical dogma. This notion, however, is unbiblical and misleading. It is a blessing for the church that this wooden, soulless idea of revelation is wrested out of its hand through the entire course of modern theology. God is no theorem, no mere idea, no postulate, but the material ground of all things as the infinite creative personality, the eternal Love. When this God intended to reveal Himself, doctrines and letters were too small as organs of his self-communication; it had to take place rather through personalities whose whole life was an attestation of God to their con-

temporaries, because they spoke and taught in his own power: "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the *prophets*, hath in these days spoken unto us *by the Son*" (Heb. 1. 1), and when he selected for himself continuators of his work, he said to one of them: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matt. 16. 18); thou art to become the personality forming the foundation of my Church, as he indeed became, not as first pope, but as the preacher on the Day of Pentecost and leader of the primitive church. Men, who suffered themselves to be apprehended of God and who spent their lives in his service for their fellow-men remained to this day the organs by which God conveys object-lessons to mankind; that he lives and rules as of old. Where such witnesses are lacking, the most ingenious proofs, the best books will always leave behind the impression of insufficiency.

It is an advantage of modern research that it suffers itself to be led, especially through the figures of the Old Testament, to see this importance of personalities; to apprehend them also with the average standard in

hand it cannot comprehend their attitude when it is opposed by the mystery of personal life, the indefinable, enigmatical, and apparently contradictory. One gradually learns not to condemn it immediately as disease or fiction, because the great and sublime shines upon us in the incalculable, and inimitable. But it must not be expected that this insight is everywhere asserted. What is conceded to a Jeremiah, a Mohammed or a Francis of Assisi, can not be refused to the personalities of the New Testament, to a Paul and a John, and above all to *Jesus*. It is a fatal mistake that those most powerful in the kingdom of the spirit, are again and again examined in a pedantic manner, as to supposed contradictions, and that that which puzzles the personal taste of the compiler, is resolutely adjudicated from them. Thus we have had quite a number of Jesus-figures: the smart politician of Reimarus; the enlightened moralizer of rationalism; the meek Nazarene of Renan; the ecstatic of O. Holtzmann; the unreal Jesus of Kalthoff, etc. But the portrait of Jesus in the Gospels has ever silently resisted this effort and shall do so in future. The personality of Jesus

proves itself again and again so great and comprehensive, that each editor of his life can well point out in it some traits but misses the mark when he imagines that he can omit other traits less congenial to him. It is not science but prejudice, to declare war especially on the mysterious as such, on the miraculous in principle.

Applied to the Johannean question it means: the objections to the credibility of the Gospel of John, can appear forcibly only to him who has made clear to himself the importance of the personal element in *Jesus and in John*, and perceives both as a given, fathomed quantity, whose relation to a book like the fourth Gospel can be settled with all certainty. "But we know both" it is said "from the synoptists and with these the description of the fourth Gospel does not tally!" This is just the question.

As concerns *Jesus*, it is a critical condition for the opponents of the Gospel of John, that in the synoptic Gospels also they must declare a great many traits which point to the Johannean direction as unhistorical or put there in the background. I mean here not the synoptic passages from which it

can be indirectly shown that Jesus was indeed more than once in Jerusalem, and in fact died on the fourteenth day of Nisan. Upon such outpost engagements we will not dwell. I rather refer to the main point, the *picture of Christ* of the synoptists. Is the same humanly genial, that everything is completely spent in a "purely historical" consideration? Not at all. The same Jesus who, as the meek Son of man and popular itinerant preacher seeks the lost sheep of Israel, has besides all this an indescribable eminence in his appearance also in the synoptists. The demoniacs cry out when they meet him (Matt. 8. 29; Mark 1. 24); the people are greatly astonished at him (Matt. 7. 28; Mark 1. 27); even the disciples have this feeling (Matt. 8. 27; Mark 6. 51); Peter said to him: "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" (Luke 5. 8 seq.); the centurion of Capernaum is afraid to invite Jesus to his house (Matt. 8. 8); the people of Nazareth respectfully make room for him as he passes through the midst of men (Luke 4. 30); the Pharisees see in his work the power of devils (Matt. 12. 24 seq.); Herod thinks with trembling that the Bap-

tist is risen from the dead (Matt. 14. 1 seq.); at the death of Jesus the centurion exclaims: "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15. 39). On the other hand, sons of his people forsake everything at his word and follow him (Matt. 4. 19 seq.; 9. 9), even though he imposes on them the greatest sacrifices and renunciations (5. 29 seq.; 8. 22; 19. 21; Luke 9. 62; 14. 25 seq.); great multitudes gather unto him (Mark 4. 1; Luke 12. 1), and numerous sick become sound by his word and his touch, so that the multitudes glorified God (Matt. 9. 8; Luke 7. 16). If we ask for the reason of this impression of Jesus upon the people, we find it at any rate not only in these miraculous deeds, but in the powerful authority with which Jesus spoke. With a quiet decision he declares who shall enter into the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18. 3; 19. 14; Mark 12. 34), the poor, the hungry, the wretched whose fate seemed to represent the very outcast to the kingdom of God (Luke 6. 20 seq.).

He puts himself in opposition to the tradition of the scribes (Matt. 9. 15; 15. 3 seq.), even to the very letter of the law (5. 32; 15. 11; 19. 4 seq.); with his powerful "but I say

unto you" he deepens the demand of Jewish legality into a morality of the heart springing from religion (5. 22 seq.). He knows himself entitled to forgive sins (9. 2 seq.; Luke 7. 48 seq.) and to give all that labor rest of soul (Matt. 11. 28 seq.). He promises heavenly reward (5. 12; 10. 42; 19. 29; Luke 14. 14) for all that which is done and suffered "for my sake" (Matt. 5. 11; 10. 18, 22; 24. 9); but just as plainly also everlasting destruction for those who refuse his message and despise his admonitions (5. 26 seq.; 10. 15, 28; 11. 22 seq.; 12. 36 seq.; 13. 42 seq.; 18. 6 seq.; 25. 46).

In his last hours he still announces to his unjust judges their defeat (26. 64), but promises paradise to the penitent thief (Luke 23. 43). With royal independence he desists from being understood by his family (Matt. 12. 46 seq.; 13. 57; Luke 11. 28), and announces judgment to his people if they do not repent (Matt. 8. 10 seq.; 12. 39, 45; 23. 37 seq.; Luke 13. 3 seq.). How aristocratic in the best sense is his reply to Herod Antipas who meant to frighten him away (Luke 13. 32 seq.); how dignified his silence before Caiaphas, Pilate

and Herod! (Matt. 26. 63; Mark 15. 5; Luke 23. 9.) But the same Jesus could also speak with holy indignation (Matt. 23. 13 seq.; Mark 3. 5) and with telling invectives (Matt. 16. 23; Luke 9. 55), especially where he saw the profane in the holy place, as in the house of Jairus and the cleansing of the temple (Matt. 9. 25; 21. 12).

He was not afraid occasionally to express in a strange and unmistakable manner that which was to go to the heart, to cause reflection thereby (5. 29 seq.; 8. 22; 15. 11; 16. 6; 25. 29). To his hearers he promised persecution and sufferings instead of splendid Messianic days, without fearing the bad impression of such expressions (5. 10 seq.; 10. 16 seq., 38 seq.; 13. 21; 16. 24 seq.). He knew that though he had to suffer the cross, that his words would remain, "though heaven and earth pass away" (24. 35). And his authority Jesus derived from his relation to God. He speaks not as the scribes miserably subtilizing and scheming ordinances, but like one who has power from God, and draws from the full (7. 29). He knows that the prayer of faith is heard by God (7. 7 seq.; Luke 18. 7 seq.; Mark 11. 24 seq.).

He knows when God forgives and when not (Matt. 5. 25 seq.; 6. 14 seq.; 18. 35; 15. 20 seq.; 18. 14).

He knows how God shall judge man (7. 21; 25. 21), and why he lets him alone so long (13. 30; Luke 13. 8). He knows God's thoughts concerning men, and he understands his rule (Matt. 5. 45; 6. 8, 32; 11. 25 seq.), from intimate communion with him, just as he sees through the hearts and thoughts of men with a divinely quickened look (9. 4; 22. 18). His disciples noticed how often he retired to solitude for silent prayer before God (Mark 1. 35; Luke 11. 1), and how he knew to speak to them of mysterious experiences with God, from which he derived the proof that he was the one chosen of God (Matt. 3. 16), that he overcame Satan (4. 11; 12. 29; 10. 18 seq.), and will die for the redemption of men (20. 28; 26. 28); but being glorified by God (17. 1 seq.), shall return again (16. 27 seq.; 24. 30) as judge of the world (7. 22 seq.; 13. 41; 19. 28; 25. 31 seq.). They could not explain to themselves this iron confidence. They felt, indeed, that their Master spoke and worked in the power of the Holy Spirit

(4. 1; 12. 28; Luke 4. 14); but also just as clearly that every comparison with the inspired man of the old covenant fails here. Jesus himself attributed to his person an importance, as no other prophet had claimed. He demanded that one should confess him before men (Matt. 10. 32); he declared that the relation to him would decide at the last judgment (25. 35 seq.), because the entire work of salvation (11. 27; 28. 18) for all mankind even outside of Israel (8. 11; 21. 43; 24. 14; 28. 19) is given to him. Capernaum would be punished more severely than Sodom (11. 21 seq.). The Son of Man is more than the temple (12. 6); he is also Lord of the Sabbath (12. 8). He is more than Jonas and Solomon (12. 41 seq.) for he brings that which prophets and kings have only longed for without experiencing it (Luke 10. 24). Even the Messianic Name—"Son of David"—is too humble for him (Matt. 22. 41 seq.).

On the other hand, his disciples are through him more than prophets and righteous men (10. 41 seq.); the least in heaven is greater than John the Baptist who, among all men before Jesus, is the greatest (11. 11

seq.). If his own are so highly esteemed before God, how much more he himself! He who receives him, receives God, who sent him (10. 40); for he is not a servant and subject like the others, but the Son of the Father (21. 37 seq.; 17. 26; Mark 13. 32) who can say: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him!" (Matt. 11. 27; Luke 10. 22.) The experience that God the Father is in heaven is connected with the divine revelation which the gracious will of Jesus brings to man; whoever wishes to experience God as the helper for body and soul, must trust in Jesus; he must *believe* (Matt. 8. 10; 9. 28; 15. 28; 18. 6; Mark 5. 36; 9. 23; Luke 18. 42). And when the disciples of Jesus, believing on him, meet, he gives them this promise: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18. 20), "and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (28. 20).

I well know that an effort has been made to eliminate this whole series of synoptic

traits from the authentic life-picture of Jesus, by means of the most varied arguments; but this means to mutilate the synoptic Christ, not to describe him. Agreed also that the Jesus of the first three Gospels not "wholly belongs to the side of mankind," and not only "surpasses by the call peculiar to him only," his fellow creatures but according to his entire personality is a mystery, and indeed a divine mystery, which no human definition will ever exhaust, because God alone fathoms it. But faith looks into it inquiringly and rejoices in the unspeakable gift of God.

IV

THE PERSONALITY OF JOHN

THE uniqueness of the person of Jesus shows itself also in the manner in which he affected his disciples. We should already be thankful to them if, after the manner of the disciples of the Jewish rabbis, they had retained his words and had always repeated them for the instruction of the new members joining the congregation. But more than this happened. It is a saying: "When the kings build, the carters are busy"; but this King in the kingdom of the Spirit, proved his claim on the human race by this, that he not only employed carters and beggars, but created personalities in each of which something of his essence and work was reflected as the contents of the whole life of a disciple. Jesus did not send stenographers, copyists and instantaneous photographers into the world as witnesses of his life, but men in whom his word, his mode of thinking, his life-work, *his Spirit* had assumed a personal figure. This could only take place

after the life of Jesus had found its earthly close by his *death* on the cross and his resurrection. Until then his impress on the disciples was always dimmed by the Jewish Messianic expectations which they associated with his person (Mark 10. 37; Acts 1. 6). They had heard and seen him, but only through the medium of their wishes, and it is not always that "seeking and desiring" are a guarantee of the right way. One can also pursue phantoms in which very unreasonable desires clothe themselves. But now the work of Jesus was before them as a whole; they could see what he brought and what he did not bring. In the light of his death only they understood many of his words, whereas they had formerly taxed the patience of Jesus by their lack of understanding (Mark 4. 13; 6. 52; 8. 17; 9. 32). Now his Spirit could freely rule in them by means of the adopted words and the understood ministries of Jesus. Helpless young men became strong men in Christ. How variously this happened the very synoptic Gospels prove with their differing coloring of the Christ-picture which is not at all accidental but which rests on the reflection and

memory of the first Christians. This of course we find nowhere else.

In the words of Jesus, however, one had found simply "trust in God, purity of heart, mercy, humility, placability and nothing else." But these demands upon men have never been and never will be the whole of Christianity. To be sure the Gospel of Mark shows us how in the recollection of many Christians Jesus lived on preëminently as the great miracle-worker, as the helper and saviour sent from God, who finally died for the salvation of men; as the glorious hero who in the power of God overcame Satan. In the Gospel of Matthew the life of Jesus moves in the light of *prophecy* and fulfillment, which was of vital interest for Jewish Christians. Here Jesus is the promised Messiah of Israel, the Lawgiver and King in the kingdom of heaven; the founder of the new covenant-people in whom words and deeds unite in a wondrous whole. The Gospel of Luke, however, causes the Jewish background of the life of Jesus to recede, and the author, dwelling the more earnestly on that whereby Christ affects man in general, his mercy toward the poor and the outcasts,

awakens a spirit which finds response in every human soul.

But the masterpiece of the transforming power of the exalted Lord is *Paul*, the disciple, who never knew Jesus in his earthly life, and for all details of that life had to depend on the communications of eye-witnesses. The appearance of Jesus on the way to Damascus placed Paul immediately face to face with the final result of the life of Jesus. He now saw him whom he had thus far hated and despised as the crucified one in his exalted state. From this fact, from retrospection, he was compelled to inquire into the mystery of the work and person of Jesus, and as a result, leaving out of sight the non-essential, he apprehended Jesus as he who had died for our sins and rose again as the author of a new life in the Spirit. This very Paul was called to explain the gospel in its eternal power to all men as none other before him could do. His life, rich in labor, in the communion with the exalted Christ, gave sufficient proof that the permanence of Christianity does not depend on the wording of certain recollections from the life of Jesus, but on the personal work-

ing of the historical Jesus in personalities who are converted and regenerated by him. Paul is not the second founder of Christianity. He is its powerful pioneer on missionary ways and theological lines of thought, which the disciples had not yet even thought of. His whole being is prophecy; what great and unexpected things the living Christ would work in the human race far beyond the limits of his historical appearance; how gloriously the mystery of the Gospel will unfold itself to coming generations under the guidance of his Spirit.

The best in this respect was done by John, the man who speaks to us in the fourth Gospel. Far be it from me to delineate a picture of his life and development, but we must just as little pass by the hints which his writings and the rest of the New Testament give us. The synoptic Gospels describe the son of Zebedee, John, the fisherman of the Sea of Gennesaret, as a man of strong, passionate temper, who was not so much a man of the world as Peter, but who was more inwardly moved by enthusiasm for his Lord and quick zeal for his honor. Jesus called him and his brother James the "sons of

thunder" (Boanerges, Mark 3. 17), and the best explanation of this name is given in the narrative in which we are told that both wished that fire should come down upon a city of the Samaritans, which refused to receive Jesus (Luke 14. 54), by referring to the example of Elias (Luke 14. 54). Jesus, however, rebuked them, and said: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

John alone zealously complains of the man who without belonging to the company of the disciples can cast out devils in the name of Jesus (Luke 9. 49). But Jesus answered: "Forbid him not, for he that is not against you is for you." Equally decided is Jesus when, shortly before the arrival at Jericho, the two brothers ask of him to be granted to sit one at his right hand, and the other on the left hand, in his glory (Mark 10. 37). He asks them whether they were ready to suffer and die with him, and when they cheerfully affirm this, he indeed holds out prospects to both but leaves the disposal of places of honor to his Father, and exhorts the disciples in general to strive after the true greatness which consists, as in his own case, in service. But notwithstanding this

unmistakable material ambition, John always appears among the three most familiar disciples of Jesus. He is permitted to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5. 37); he sees the Transfiguration on the mountain in the north (9. 2); he asks Jesus concerning the future of the temple (13. 3); he accompanies Jesus into the garden of Gethsemane to watch there with Jesus (14. 33).

As in the case of Peter, Jesus must have seen something in this Galilean youth which in spite of his faults and hastiness spoke well for him. That which attracted John to Jesus he thus expresses in his Gospel: the proofs of his deep, kind knowledge of the heart which saw and understood the heart of Christ (John 2. 25; 6. 64; 13. 11; 16. 30; 21. 17) and also his miraculous deeds at which the multitude wondered, not only as heralding a time of salvation, but according to Jesus's instruction (Mark 2. 10) as signs also of his glory, his power to help body and soul (John 2. 11; 4. 54; 5. 36; 10. 25 seq.; 14. 11). Later, after the resurrection of Jesus, he received also an additional proof of prophecy in the unbelief

of the Jews and the betrayal by Judas. The sufferings and resurrection of Jesus he truly apprehended as having deeper significance and he expressed this perception by means of the "it is written" (2. 22; 12. 38 seq.; 13. 18; 15. 25; 17. 12; 19. 24; 28. 36 seq.; 20. 9). The habit of finding a hidden sense in Old Testament texts, also influenced his understanding of the words of Jesus (2. 21; 7. 39; 12. 33; 21. 19), so that he speaks of these also as a "fulfillment" (18. 9, 32).

In this sense we find John in the Acts of the Apostles as a pillar of the congregation in Jerusalem (Gal. 2. 9), and as the most important Jewish missionary next to Peter. Jewish missionary! With this the last word is spoken for many, and every further development is precluded. Our knowledge of John is at an end, unless the Jews have perchance killed him. But was it necessary for a Galilean Jewish Christian to be a stupid Judaist and zealot for the law? Peter already gives the counterproof, not only as he is described in the Acts of the Apostles, but also by Paul (Gal. 2. 14). The obstinate men of the circumcision and the adversaries of Paul were to be sought

less among the Galileans than among the former priests (Acts 6. 7) and Pharisees (15. 5) of Judea. Against their pretensions a James (Gal. 2. 12) might be too lenient, because he and the other brothers of the Lord had no intercourse with Jesus during his public ministry (John 7. 5), like Peter and John, who were the nearest to Jesus, and had in their recollection of him and in prayerful intercourse with him, a source of life-power and inner continuous development. This very idea is most impressibly emphasized by the Gospel of John: "of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1. 16). Many things which Jesus had not yet told them on account of their limitations as disciples, became afterward clear to them; not however from a strange source, but through the teachings of his Spirit concerning him and the consequences of his work (16. 4, seq.), so that they now stood nearer to him than before (16. 23 seq.).

I can hardly understand how one will reject just here the idea of development which otherwise governs the entire modern contemplation of nature and history where it

forces itself, as it were, on impartial view. It is not indeed a development from an imminent vitality, but one under the guidance of the Spirit of God. To it belonged above all that the great and new which was given to the church of Jesus in Paul, did not pass by John without leaving a trace. Paul brought Christianity to a universal development outwardly by concentrating it inwardly upon the decisive principal points: the human race in sin; Christ Crucified and Exalted; Life in the Holy Ghost; the Church of Jesus Christ; the coming of the Lord in glory. John learned from Paul. This proves already the fact that after a few decades he appears in Asia Minor, having thus sought his field of labor among the Gentiles, because Palestine closed its eyes more and more to the Gospel and hastened the solution of the Messianic problems through the sword of the zealots. Here also originated his first work, the *Revelation* of John, a book which, in a very erroneous manner was put in the keenest contrast to the other Johannean literature because one overlooked in the great variety of objects the still greater agreement in fundamental idea. The same is colored

throughout Pauline in color, much also as the book betrays Jewish types and feelings concerning the coming of the Lord in judgment. The principal person of the Apocalypse is Jesus who died on the cross (Rev. 1. 5, 18; 2. 8; 11. 8); the Lamb slain for us (5. 6 seq.; 13. 8; 14. 1 seq.; 19. 7 seq.). He speaks to the seer as the exalted (1. 5, 13 seq., 18; 3. 21; 12. 5), who shall come again to victory over all his enemies (1. 7; 2. 16; 3. 11; 14. 14 seq.; 19. 11 seq.; 22. 7 seq.), after his church has gone with him the way to the cross (1. 9; 2. 3; 6. 9; 7. 14; 12. 11; 13. 15; 17. 6; 20. 4). The Church is gathered from all nations (5. 9; 7. 9; 15. 4; 21. 24; 22. 2), and consists of the saints (5. 8; 13. 7; 17. 6; 22. 21) who believe on Jesus (2. 13; 14. 12; 17. 14). In reading the Apocalypse we rightly see ourselves reminded of the "son of thunder," John; but he has now learned to understand the long-suffering of Christ; his entire book may be called the book of divine patience, which again and again puts off the decisive stroke. The author has still to battle with the Greek language commonly used in the country where he had just now settled. In his

images of the future, old motives and new impressions are still fermenting promiscuously; but the firm point on which his prophetic thinking sees its way, is Christ the Victor, and here on earth were still greater things destined for him.

John had learned to believe with Mark in the miracle-worker Jesus; with the Gospel of Matthew in the promised Messiah; with Paul and Luke in the Friend of sinners, and the Saviour of the Gentiles. Now it is a known fact, that in manhood, when the tasks of life expand and deepen, reflection also is all the more turned to that which properly gave our life its direction and its content. Many things which in younger years were considered as decisive and valuable, do not stand the test and are dropped. The more serious the question arises as to the inmost cause of our personal state of life, and especially of our Christianity. John survived all other apostles; he was still laboring in Asia Minor after Paul and Peter had long since suffered martyrdom. The Roman empire under a new dynasty recovered from the civil wars; the Jewish people were crushed by the destruction of their temple;

in the church one after the other had died whom John had known; but the Lord came not from heaven; he seemed to have forgotten his disciples and his church. No wonder that the eyes of the aging apostle turned with redoubled energy to that which no changes and disappointments of the present could take from him, the biographical portrait of Jesus, through whom he had once experienced the great change of a new life. What was the decisive blessing in Jesus? Behind all that we have heretofore mentioned, something higher flashed up, the secret of the person of Jesus, which appeared to us so clearly from the synoptic accounts—his unique relation to God—that he was not only a prophet, inspired, sent from God, a Messiah in the Jewish sense, but also the Son of God, who stood in the deepest, personal life-communion with God (John 1. 52; 14. 11); so that open eyes could see the glory of God in all his actions (1. 14; 2. 11).

In like manner was his unique relation to men. They saw in him not only a teacher and helper, but a new life, the life from God (5. 24 seq.; 6. 33 seq.; 10. 10; 17. 2). And this was perceived not merely as a matter of

fleeting sensation or artificial excitement, but as truth, as highest reality (1. 14; 4. 23; 8. 32; 18. 37), which became their own through knowledge, not theoretical information, but practical experience (6. 69; 7. 17; 8. 32; 10. 14; 17. 3). True, that Jesus lived in the memory of John as a man (4. 29; 7. 46; 8. 40; 19. 5), as one who in his entire work was dependent on God (5. 19, 30; 8. 28), and lived in obedience to God (4. 34; 6. 38; 8. 29); as man, who when wearied sat on the well of Jacob (4. 6), wept at the grave of Lazarus (11. 35), and before his suffering experienced deep inward commotions (12. 27; 13. 21). But more important than these traits which irrevocably belonged to the past, were to him the experiences with Jesus which now also renewed themselves in his communion with the exalted Christ, and through him with God (14. 20, 23; 15. 4. seq.; 17. 23); the abiding sense of God in Jesus, which revealed itself ever more clearly to the reflection of the disciple at the bottom of the self-consciousness of Jesus. As many a word of parental love comes to our memory again in the stress of life after the parents have long

since passed away, their words, however, are fulfilled in our experience; thus John, under the struggles and sufferings of his apostolic office among the Gentiles, recalled many sayings of Jesus which he heard from his lips as a young beginner, but which at that time he but lightly esteemed because he still labored under the confused expectations of the circle of the disciples. Among these especially were the statements of Jesus concerning *himself*, which had been wrung from him through the opposition and accusations of his adversaries, particularly in Jerusalem, the principal seat of antagonism to him; statements concerning his life with God (10. 30, 38; 14. 10 seq., 20; 16. 32; 17. 21), concerning his life's purpose with God (3. 13; 6. 62; 7. 33; 8. 21) and his mysterious descent from God (6. 62; 8. 23), which is not from the stream of time, but from God's eternity (8. 58; 17. 5, 24). John states expressly that many words of Jesus again occurred to him and to the other disciples in general only after his resurrection, and which had now become intelligible (2. 22; 12. 16; comp. 13. 7). Have we a right to explain this as mere

literary fiction? On the contrary, this was the joy of his old age, that the inner and outer experiences of his long Christian life came to a harmonious whole with the impressions of his choleric youth; that he could bear witness to the Church, that the Christ with whom Paul conquered the world is no syncretistic fancy picture, but the historical Jesus, whose earthly life already breathed the atmosphere of eternity.

V

THE ORIGINALITY OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE fourth Gospel proceeded from the holy joy which prompts its author to leave this treasure of experiences and recollections to the Church. We must not ascribe it to some "great unknown," but we can unhesitatingly attribute it to John. With this joy in his face Raphael represented him writing in the Disputa, and we must not allow this gladness to be distorted into the ironical smile of a forger. It became indeed a wonderful book. John meant to describe a personality which has no analogy; the "only Son of the Father" (1. 14, 18; 3. 16; 1 John 4. 9). He does not engage with his opponents in dialectical discussion, in documentary proceedings, but simply states: "thus it was, and thus it is." He considers the exhibition satisfactory as proved. But by no means does he intend to set forth everything he knows; he will not write a "life of Jesus," but says at the close of his work: "and many

other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But *these* are written, *that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name*" (John 20. 30 seq.). By this he designates the contents of the book as a selection of "signs," that is, of deeds and accompanying discourses of Jesus, which are to give the reader an insight into that which Jesus of Nazareth is. He is the Messiah, as the primitive church already confessed, but not in the natural and officially circumscribed sense which many Jewish Christians associated with the word Messiah. His calling rests entirely upon his person; he is the Son of God, through whom the Father has spoken as through none else. To believe in him constitutes the innermost nature of the Christian life. Whoever believes on him, receives in his name through the effects which proceed from connection with his person the true life; and thereby the practical proof, that in him we have God. This literary intention is carried out with surprising energy and consequence through the whole Gospel. This book is

indeed not written by the "flagging hand of an old man"; for not every man of seventy or eighty years is already a decrepit old man. We knew one of ninety years, who had not had time to be weary, and nothing compels us to go down to the last years of the first century. John omitted many things from the life of Jesus because they were already sufficiently known to his readers, and in their stead he narrated other events which, for reasons unknown, had not been received into the synoptic tradition influenced by the Peter-narratives of Mark. But he selected only such incidents which to him seemed to throw an important light upon the person of Jesus, and which were the cause of the remarkable statements of Jesus concerning himself. Hence the origin of that which has been called the monotony of the Gospel of John.

The theme is always the same: Jesus himself, whether John the Baptist, or Nicodemus, or Caiaphas, or Pilate speak, they all speak of Jesus. That John was a preacher of repentance, Caiaphas a high priest, Pilate a procurator, is for the author a secondary consideration. To some of our contempo-

raries who bring their art-motives from Japan, their religion from India, and their ethics from elsewhere, this may seem intolerably one-sided; but nervous versatility has no right to blame a book which has produced such great things by its very sound uniformity.

Some striking liberties of the author are indeed evident. The relation of Jesus to his people is wholly described in the light of past history through which it became clear that upon the whole Israel had refused the Gospel. Christianity, however, as a new religion, entered upon its way through the world free from the Mosaic law. That Jesus himself lived under the law we learn indirectly from the fact of his journeys to the legal feasts, for the rest of it is mainly the law of Moses (John 7. 19, 23; comp. 1. 17); the law of the Jews (7. 51; 8. 17; 10. 34; 15. 25), which like the rest of the Old Testament, contains prophecies concerning him (5. 39, 46 seq.). Among the countrymen of Jesus a distinction is indeed made between the "people," which gladly listened to Jesus, and the high priests and Pharisees who oppose him but the collective name "Jews," is

with preference applied to these opponents of Jesus. The time of worshiping in Jerusalem is past (4. 21); Jesus lives not only for Israel but for the future "children of God" out of all nations, who are to be gathered in through him (10. 16; 11. 52). The miracles of Jesus, which for Jewish minds played such an important part (Mark 8. 11; John 6. 30; 1 Cor. 1. 22), are as outward events little regarded. One can experience them and yet inwardly be a stranger to Jesus (John 1. 51; 2. 23 seq.; 4. 48; 12. 37). On him to whom they became signs of Christ's indwelling power they had accomplished their purpose. In like manner the eschatology which, in the synoptists, especially in the great discourse on the second coming of Christ, has such a strong Jewish coloring, is indeed set aside by John (14. 3; 5. 28; 12. 48; 5. 29), but words are put in the foreground in which the future blessings of salvation are attested as being already present in Jesus (14. 18; 11. 25; 3. 18; 14. 6). As to the past as well as to the future, the meditating and brooding memories of the evangelist rise beyond the bounds of time, to abide by the everlasting in Christ.

But not only is the Jewish in the life of Jesus affected by this reduction and concentration upon the one thing needful, nay, the eye of John is so dazzled by the bright splendor of the personal life of Jesus, that aside from Jesus he can see only darkness, the distance only from him in the human race. He knows the relative differences in the lives of men and expresses them with psychological fineness in the various personalities of his narrative—in Nathaniel, Peter and Thomas, in Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman and Bartimæus, in Judas, Caiaphas and Pilate. But compared with Jesus this whole humanity is nothing but the *world*. Jesus is wholly and clearly on the side of God; the world is given to sin, to judgment and death, and would perish had not God out of love sent to his Son as the world's Redeemer (1. 29; 3. 16 seq.; 4. 42; 12. 47). Even honest, truth-seeking men like Nathaniel (1. 48; 3. 21; 18. 37) make no exception; their love of truth shows itself in this that they suffer themselves to be drawn by God to Jesus (6. 44 seq.; 17. 6), they learn through him the sinfulness of their hearts (1. 49; 4. 18; 5. 14; 6. 70), and through him begin a

new life (1. 43; 3. 3). Now he keeps them (10. 28; 17. 12) as his chosen ones (6. 70; 13. 18; 15. 16), and prays for them (14. 16; 17. 19); he dies for them (10. 15 seq.; 15. 13), and overcomes the world for them (16. 33), so that the hatred of the world in which they live, cannot harm them (15. 18 seq.; 17. 11). Whoever believes not in Jesus is subject to divine wrath and is excluded from eternal life (3. 36). This keen contrast between the work of God in Christ and the world has been called "dualism"; but this is an altogether misleading expression, because dualism in philosophical usage designates the opposition of spirit and matter, whereas John conceives the creation as not separated entirely from God; he makes Jesus really live in the flesh (1. 14; 6. 51 seq.). As no supposed monism has yet succeeded in deriving organic life from inorganic existence, mental life from animal instinct, so John emphasizes with all energy that the life that he and his fellow-Christians had received was a gift which only Jesus could give, and which puts in the shade every other content of human life. But this life entered our real world through Jesus and it

produces not only desire for heaven but power over sin.

The same general latitude and liberty is shown by John also in the manner in which he treats his matter as an author. He sometimes commences a narrative, but follows it up only so far until the momentous words of Jesus are mentioned; he then breaks off and the reader can draw his own conclusions. Thus, at the cleansing of the temple (2. 20), in the colloquy with Nicodemus (3. 21), at the raising of Lazarus (11. 44), in the narrative of the Greeks who wished to see Jesus (12. 26). At other times in the midst of an incident he refers to former events which belong to another connection. At the feast of tabernacles he is reminded of the healing of the sick at Bethesda which took place a year before (7. 21; 5. 8). The subject of the Good Shepherd he takes up again after many months on the feast of the dedication (10. 26, 15). In the farewell addresses Jesus admonishes the disciples at the end of chapter 14 to go to Gethsemane (14. 31), yet two other chapters follow and the high-priestly prayer. The narratives are given in an order which visibly answers the

desire to show the revelation of God in Christ, and its different reception by men in some typical examples. In like manner the sayings of Jesus which are related as to content are put together in large discourses as was done already by the first evangelist, and before him by the author of the address-narratives. The farewell addresses, so to speak, need not to have been successively delivered in one hour, as we now read them; but John united at this point what on the whole he remembered of the words of Jesus spoken in the midst of his disciples before his crucifixion. Between the words of Jesus he occasionally puts some explanatory remarks (2. 21 seq.; 6. 6, 64; 7. 39; 8. 27; 11. 13, 51; 12. 33, 41; 13. 11; 18. 9, 32), in which he shows his predilection for mysterious references to future events. But his greatest boldness is evinced where he makes Jesus as well as John the Baptist, and other persons *speak Johannean*, that is, in the language of the many axioms described heretofore, in which a few main thoughts are varied in different ways through effectual contrasts between Christ and what Christ is not. In the face of all this emphasis, can the

question still be of the credibility of the Gospel? It would seem not. For him who rejects the idea of verbal inspiration and demands stenography, everything should not become uncertain.

But we shall do well to consider the following facts: Each author of antiquity was in the habit of forming without the least scruple the speeches of his heroes as regards style, because one proceeded from the correct consideration that the thoughts, the contents of that which had been spoken was the effectual thing, and not the accidental form of the text. Once only does John quote a solemn address of Jesus (12. 44 seq.), after he had narrated that Jesus had departed from the persistently unbelieving people in Jerusalem (12. 36). A popular address ("he cried and said") without hearers? No, but an address in which, at the close of the public ministry of Jesus, his testimony was again but slightly comprehended by the evangelist. Jesus and his disciples were far removed from fixing sacred formulas and texts. The best known words of Jesus, even the Lord's Prayer and the words at the Lord's Supper, are extant in different texts.

The church of Jesus was not to swear to words and fight over words, but to rejoice in the thing, present salvation in Christ. Like none else John shows a sovereign indifference toward the naked text. When he refers back to what has been said before, he generally quotes it deviating from the former wording (3. 3 and 7; 7. 34 and 13. 33; 8. 21 and 24; 6. 44 and 65; 11. 26 and 40; 17. 12 and 18. 9). On the other hand, he quotes words which, according to the text, exclude themselves, but in truth only illustrate the same matter from two different sides (3. 17 and 9. 39; 5. 31 and 8. 14; comp. 1 John 1. 10 and 3. 9; 2. 7 and 8; John 3. 32 and 33). This license over against the letter is connected with the innermost nature of the spiritual *state of the disciple*. John knows indeed that one becomes a disciple when one hears and receives the words of Jesus (5. 24; 12. 48), keeps and preserves them (8. 51; 15. 7). He also knows that the Holy Spirit who rules in the church since the exaltation of Jesus to the Father (7. 39; 20. 22), brings nothing new beyond Jesus, but reminds the disciples of the words of Jesus; testifies to them of Jesus

and glorifies Jesus in them (14. 26; 15. 26; 16. 14). Therefore in an increasing measure John formed his own mode of expression on the very self-testimonies of Jesus which as time passed became more precious and valuable. Whereas the Apocalypse very much reminds us of the Old Testament and Jewish Apocalypses, John's language in his Gospel has wholly assumed the solemnly simple strain, emphasizing great contrasts and sayings which we also find among the synoptists where Jesus speaks of himself (Matt. 11. 25 seq.; 10. 32 seq.; 12. 30 seq.; 13. 11 seq.; 18. 18 seq.; 25. 31 seq.; 28. 18 seq.; Luke 12. 49 seq.; 13. 32 seq.). To this John added nothing foreign to Jesus, but as with regard to the contents, he only let the real keynote of the life of Jesus sound through everything.

It is remarkable that in the Epistles of John which belong to the same time, the language is the same, the thoughts, however, less in depth and originality than the discourses of Jesus, are more adapted to the ordinary Christian consciousness and thus answered the practical purpose of the Epistles, which are an echo of the Gospel

and not its source. But in these very Epistles John shows himself free from all anxious adherence to given expressions. For instance, in the Gospel, the Holy Spirit is called the Comforter (14. 16, 26; 15. 26; 16. 7) but Jesus is thus named in the First Epistle (2. 1), and the Spirit is called Unction (2. 20, 27). To the work of Christ is applied the thought of "propitiation," which is wanting in the Gospel (2. 2; 4. 10). The Evangelist John is filled with the thought that the words of Jesus are not saving formulas, whose most frequent repetition evidences connection with God, but that they are *Spirit and Life* (John 6. 63), words in which are expressed thoughts of God, truths of God which have an everlasting meaning and which apply to the most different times and relations; words of eternal life through which the Spirit of Truth guides the disciples into *all* truth (6. 68; 16. 13). Jesus himself lives in the disciples who believe on him (6. 56; 14. 20; 15. 4 seq.; 17. 23 seq.); and hence the disciple remains not always weak and helpless, but the water which Jesus gives him, becomes in him a well of water (4. 14; 7. 38). He can say:

"We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2. 16) ; he is the friend of Jesus, not merely his servant (John 15. 14 seq.). He asks Jesus no more questions of doubt and lacking of understanding (16. 23) nor does he need any more metaphorical explanations of the thoughts of Jesus (16. 25). In Spirit-communion with Jesus, the disciple is immediately certain of the love of God (16. 26 seq.). Imagining that the Gospel of John was written by a man who had reached the height of maturity in discipleship, we will not expect that for the space of half a century he preserved to us every expression of Jesus in an authentic text; that his personal order or mode of life and mode of expression remained without any influence on this book, nevertheless we cannot but conceive that only a disciple and eye-witness could write so freely and deeply; and that we have here before us the portraiture of the historical Jesus.

VI

THE CONTENTS OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

TURNING from the evangelist to his Gospel, its very introduction, the prologue (1. 1-18), gives us an imposing proof of the intellectual liberty and largeness of the view which John had obtained in his life as a disciple, rich in the experiences of the earlier evangelists. Mark commenced his account with John the Baptist (Mark 1. 1 seq.); Matthew prefaced his by a history of the birth and infancy and traced the origin of Jesus back to Abraham (Matt. 1. 1 seq.). Luke brought a still more detailed fore-history and went back even to Adam (Luke 3. 38). For John this was insufficient. True, that he also commences his historical notices with John the Baptist (1. 6, 15, 19), through whom he had himself come to Jesus (1. 35 seq.); true, that he also knew that Jesus was born of a woman (2. 1 seq.; 6. 42; 18. 37; 19. 25 seq.), and was known among the Jews as the son of Joseph of

Nazareth (I. 46; 6. 42). But he must go further back if he is to speak of Jesus; he must reach back into the depths of *God*, which he does with those notable introductory words: "In the beginning was the word (the Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men." These words produced much veneration for the Gospel of John from the philosophically educated classes of all centuries. In modern theology, however, they have led to the opinion that the credibility of John can already be done away with by the catch-word "Logos-evangelist" and "Logos-Christ"; because from the beginning the author takes the Logos-idea as his basis, and his entire portrait of Jesus is ruled by it. The Logos-idea, however, it is asserted, he borrowed from Philo who blended the teachings of Heraclitus and the Stoics concerning the Logos, as the forming law of nature, with the Platonic ideology, and the later Jewish statements about Wisdom as media-

trix of creation, and described the Logos as the middle principle between God and the material world. In this assertion a correct observation is incorrectly turned against the Gospel. It is quite possible that John in his manifold intercourse with Hellenists and Greeks, became acquainted with their Logos-idea as a pet phrase of the educated at the time, which seemed to him suitable to convey to them an idea of the divine which appeared in Jesus; the selection of the term may have been influenced by this consideration. But still more certain is it that John did not write for a conventicle of the educated, but for the Christian church, to strengthen it in its belief in Jesus (22. 31). Hence, he had to use expressions which conveyed an idea to those without philosophic training; terms which would be comprehensible to every thoughtful member of the congregation. Such was the case when, with the term "Logos," John combined not the philosophical meaning, "rational system of the world," but the equally acceptable meaning "word," which would remind the first readers of the speaking of God in the Old Testament; above all of the history of crea-

tion which also commences with the words: "In the beginning," and then passes over to the creative speaking of God bringeth forth light and life (Gen. 1. 1 seq.). It would also remind them of many other Old Testament passages in which the word of God creates (Ps. 33. 6 seq.), runs (Ps. 147. 15), goes forth and returns (Isa. 55. 11), destroys (Jer. 23. 29) and heals (Ps. 107, 20). John starts from a biblical basis with which his readers were familiar, and from this leads them to the deepest understanding of Jesus.

The Word expresses the thought and wish of man; it reveals what is in him. The God of the Old Testament was a speaking God, a God of revelation, of self-communication, a God of the Word. John then proceeds from this well-known thought, his life-long meditation and search, to find the true expression for the mystery of the person of Jesus, and here his thought has come to a rest. In each of his great works he speaks of Jesus as Logos (Rev. 19. 13; John 1. 1, 14; 1 John 1. 1), but every time in respectful, brief reference as becomes the mystery. In the further course of the Gospel Jesus nowhere calls himself the "Word," but

speaks of the word of God in the usual, objective sense (John 5. 38; 8. 55; 10. 35; 17. 6 seq.), so accurately does John distinguish between his recollection and his profound attempt to explain the power of Jesus. The Church likewise rightly did not receive the Logos-thought into her oldest confession, but made greater use of it in her theology.¹

In the beginning, says John, before there was yet a world, was the Word. God has never been an inactive or dreaming God, rather he is a living, personal God, conscious of himself, who had to realize his thoughts. The will, for such self-manifestation, belongs inseparably to the being of God and is God himself; for God will give nothing less than himself. By the Word all things without exception were made. Nothing accidental, nothing abortive came from the hand of God; "Everything was very good." In this self-communication of God consisted and consists the life of created things. God is not the negative of concrete life, but in each being a thought of God is realized. In man, however (the author silently follows the history of creation), this divine power of

¹ See Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*.

life becomes a light, a conscious intellectual life, which is disposed to know the truth; on which account man is the crown of God's creation. These firm foundations of a Christian theism and optimism form the basis of everything that follows: the God of creation is the Father of Jesus Christ.

"And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. The true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

John does not expressly mention the fall; but with a determination which reminds us of Paul (Rom. 3. 23), he comprises the time of Judaism and that of heathenism under judgment. The light of divine revelation (here nature and conscience, there the law) existed, but it shined into humanity darkened by sin, estranged from God. Thus it continued until John the Baptist, who as the herald of the final revelation of God, was allowed to bear witness of the Light (John 1. 6-8). Now commence the personal recollections of the author, and he quickly transfers his readers to that time of

great expectation unforgotten by him, when the Baptist appeared and pointed at a greater one who should come after him. At that time the self-revelation of God to the human race which to a degree had already aided all higher life of men, was at its highest manifestation. It was "to come into the world." Its presence in the world, which owed to it its existence, had not sufficed; the world knew it not. Now came the highest which would never have entered the mind of any man: the Word of God appeared in the world through One, who, not only *had* God's word for a certain generation like the prophets (Jer. 23. 28), but was God's word for the entire human race; God's bodily, perfect manifestation, God's word in person. And how was this personal manifestation of God in him received by men?

"He came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his

glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

Here already resounds the heavy-hearted accent which afterward runs through the Gospel (3. 19, 32; 8. 43; 12. 37); the shining manifestation of the heart and will of God through Him who was the Word himself was not received, as one would have expected. He came into the world, which was his own as true as it was God's world; but the men, to whom he came, proved indifferent, as before the darkness had kept off the light. The more precious was his gift to those who received him in faith. These he made sons of God by the mysterious experience of spiritual birth from God. In their midst he dwelt as the Word, which was made flesh; as the man whose whole life was a manifestation of God and the gift of God. More luminous than Israel had once seen the "Shekinah," in the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord, believers saw the glory of the only Son in divine grace and truth which went forth from Jesus; as sons of God they perceived in him the Son of God, whom the Father had sent into the world (5. 36; 7. 28; 8. 32). John does not obtain the certainty

of this divine origin of Jesus from the Logos-thought, but, like Paul (Rom. 9. 5; 1 Cor. 8. 6; 10. 4; 15. 47; 2 Cor. 8. 9; Phil. 2. 6; Col. 1. 5 seq.), and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 1. 2 seq.) from the total impression of the life of Jesus which was confirmed to him through the recollection of the words of Jesus (John 3. 11; 6. 38, 46, 62; 8. 23, 38, 42; 16. 28; 17. 5, 8, 24). He who in his earthly existence was the image of God, and in the power of God passed from death unto glory, cannot have proceeded like ourselves from nothing. An eternal, personal relation to God must be attributed to him, through which he already shared in the pre-Christian manifestation of God (8. 56 seq.; 12. 41). Of this glory of Jesus, John the Baptist already presaged something and humbly bowed before it (1. 15). But greater things awaited the disciples of Jesus.

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” In the

same weighty conciseness which characterizes the entire prologue, there is stated here that which has been the outcome of the intercourse of the disciples with Jesus.

From the life of the Son of God, which proved to them an inexhaustible fullness of grace and truth, they could take grace for grace and were forever rescued from the power of sin. They were lifted beyond the law of Moses under which they had thus far served God slavishly (15. 15). Through Jesus the grace of God became the object of their personal experience, and the perfect knowledge of God which all former generations could not have experienced according to the existing state of the revelation of God now become realized in them through the Son of God, who could speak of God like one of his bosom friends and companions.

Thus, in this wondrous prologue, John gradually leads his readers from the very beginning of creation down to his time, from the throne of heaven to the earthly existence, and with an experienced hand, he traces the ground-lines of the picture which is afterward to shine before us in warm colors. He

first speaks of the Word, then of the Lord who had come, then of the only-begotten Son of the Father; finally, of Jesus, the Messiah (1. 17). With a firm hand John links the picture of his Master with the history of religion, and comes to the result: God's revelation in Jesus is his final word to humanity; in Jesus we have the true God. This is fullness indeed.

We were compelled to dwell at length upon the prologue because the erroneous assertion has been inferred from it that the Gospel of John could not come from an eyewitness. The rest of the book we can treat more briefly, because its systematic arrangement is striking. The first section (1. 19—4. 54) describes how Jesus appeared in Israel according to the announcement of John the Baptist, and obtained his first disciples from his followers. To this circle of disciples the miraculous wine-gift at the marriage in Cana manifests his glory; whereas, Jerusalem, in the cleansing of the temple, experiences his judicial severity; and there the first remonstrances against him already begin. The colloquy with Nicodemus shows Jesus in his intercourse with

the leading circles of the people. The conversation with the Samaritan woman reveals his affection for the lowly esteemed people, and opens prospects of a later mission beyond Israel. In the narrative of the son of the nobleman, Jesus is finally presented as the miraculous healer of the sick. Words and deeds, in close connection, testify of him as the great Saviour who goes his way in the power of God.

The *second* section (5. 1—12. 50) shows how from this work of Jesus originated the tragic conflict between him and his people. The healing of the sick at Bethesda gives offence, because it is done on the Sabbath. The Galileans are offended at Jesus, because after the feeding of the five thousand he would not take the lead of a Messianic movement, and, instead of a display of miraculous power, speaks to them of the Bread of Life and of the possibility of a bloody end. On the feast of tabernacles the urgent appeals of Jesus to believe on him meet with an even keener opposition which, in the discourse concerning Abraham, increases to outrages, and is not allayed by the healing of the man born blind. From the tenth chapter on the

transition to the circle of the disciples is prepared. In the discourse on the Good Shepherd Jesus shows what his followers have in him. He raises Lazarus. Before his entrance into Jerusalem he is anointed at Bethany. After his entrance into the city the Greeks who wish to see Jesus give him an opportunity to speak of his death. Jesus now retires from the public eye.

The *third* section (13. 1; 17. 26) describes what took place in closest communion with his disciples. At the last meal Jesus prophesies the betrayal by Judas and the denial of Peter. In the washing of their feet, he shows them his kind love and exhorts them to like love among themselves. The other farewell addresses, interrupted by questions and objections of the disciples, refer in a natural vein to his approaching farewell; to the work of Jesus thus far, which will not be destroyed but completed by his death; to the future condition of his disciples in the world and the inner support which they shall have by the assistance of the Holy Spirit; finally, to the meeting again with Jesus.

In the "high-priestly" prayer Jesus brings

before his Father the deepest requests of his soul for himself, his disciples and the future church. Painful as were the controversial disputes of the second section, as comforting are those words in the circle of the disciples with the breath of peace and the holy love which permeated them, priceless comfort for the mourners of all times.

In the *fourth* section (18. 1—20. 31) Jesus resolutely faces his destiny and with rapid strokes the tragedy develops. Jesus is taken in Gethsemane and examined before the high priest. Peter denies him. Before Pilate he acknowledges that he is a king and deeply impresses the judge, but is finally scourged and condemned to be crucified. Of the last hours, the title on the cross and the casting of lots for the garments are mentioned, together with the three words of the Crucified. The burial is preceded by the piercing of Jesus' side, whereby his actual death was determined.

The history of the passion as described by John is not devoid of truly human traits—like the thirsting on the cross—but the impression of the silent greatness, the majesty of him who voluntarily offered his life is

predominant. On the Easter-day, Peter and John find an empty grave. Mary Magdalene sees the Risen One, and in the evening He appears in the midst of his disciples. A week later Thomas is convinced of the truth of the resurrection and exclaimed: "My Lord and my God"; which thus expresses the author's innermost disposition of the heart toward Jesus.

The twenty-first chapter, with the appearance of Jesus at the Sea of Tiberias, forms an addition, probably by the hand of John himself, but with a final word by another hand (21. 24 seq.). It transfers the reader to the time when Peter had long ago suffered martyrdom, and the question was raised in the church as to the end of the aged John; that this last apostle also died and that the congregation was, nevertheless, not shaken in its belief in the coming of the Lord. This is owed to Paul and John, the men who had indelibly written into its soul that salvation is now already present in Christ, by celebrating Jesus as the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the living King and Lord.

CONCLUSION

ONE of the ablest workers in the New Testament department, Weizsäcker, comprised his doubts about the genuineness of the Gospel of John in these words: "That that apostle, according to the Gospel, the beloved disciple, who sat beside Jesus, considered and described everything which he once experienced, as living with the incarnate divine Logos is . . . a mystery. No power of faith and philosophy can be largely enough represented to obliterate the recollection of the real life and to put in its place this admirable picture of a divine life" (*Apostolisches Zeitalter*, 2d ed., p. 517). His inquiry has led us to answer: The real life of Jesus, even according to the Synop- tists, was so remarkable, so unique, so powerful, that in a disciple who spent his whole life meditating on the mystery of the person of Jesus, his conception of Jesus as the incarnate, divine Logos had to be necessarily revealed to the church at last, because his loving, reverential thought could never rest in any other explanation.

By so doing he did not put the admirable picture of a divine being in the place of the historical Jesus, but illustrated the picture of Jesus of Nazareth with the traits of divine glory which he and his fellow disciples had witnessed in Jesus. The decision for or against the truth of his account will always be conditioned by two super-historical factors: first, whether one believes in miracles, for according to John, Jesus is indeed a miraculous personality who cannot be compared even with the greatest men of the human race. He is the only one after whom we need not look for another because no religious advance of the human race can ever lead beyond Him, but only go deeper into that which he intended. Secondly, one must consider what he has experienced himself with Jesus and how he is personally related to him. He may take as his pattern a very great prophet, a religious genius, a hero of love and trust in God, he may try to reduce the accounts of all Gospels of the New Testament to the notions of this time; but the cords will not hold. But he, who needs a Redeemer from sin, a Mediator and personal Helper, and has experienced Jesus as such

in many anxious hours of his life, will gladly say with John: "We understand one another; thy Jesus is also mine; yea, He is the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Him!"¹

¹For further study see Professor Sanday's recent work on the Fourth Gospel and Recent Criticism, and *The Fourth Gospel: Its Purpose and Theology*, by Ernest F. Scott, M.A.—(T. & T. Clark.) Edinburgh.—EDITOR.

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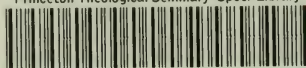
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